

Employee Assistance Program

EAP Matters
March, 2015



March Madness: When Does It Go Too Far?

It is no coincidence that March has become National Problem Gambling Month. The NCAA's March Madness basketball tournament now rivals the Super Bowl as the world's largest gambling event. The American Gaming Association reports that more money is spent during the first four days of March Madness than on the Super Bowl.

Research indicates that most adults who choose to gamble are able to do so responsibly. For problem gamblers, however, March can be a time in which they are bombarded with the opportunity to place bets, chase after losses and descend into financial ruin. March Madness has been shown to serve as the gateway to other forms of sports gambling, either online or via bookies. Carl Robertson, the Prevention Manager at the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling stated, "Before the 'Final Four' play for the championship in April, we will see the problem gambler fall into emotional and mental despair."

The progression of problem gambling can be similar to those experiencing alcoholism or substance abuse. There is scientific evidence showing that, for the problem gambler, the pleasure or reward system of the brain is activated similar to those with other addictions. At its most severe, gambling can lead to financial devastation, a pattern of dishonest and manipulative behaviors, loss of relationships and even involvement in illegal activities.

Are you wondering if your gambling might be a problem?

Answer the following:

1. During the past 12 months, have you become restless, anxious, irritable or even angry when trying to stop or cut down on gambling?
2. During the past 12 months, have you tried to keep your family and friends from knowing how much you gamble?
3. During the past 12 months, did you have such financial trouble as a result of your gambling that you had to get help with living expenses from family, friends or other financial assistance?

Responding "yes" to any of these questions indicates that you might benefit from talking with an Employee Assistance Counselor about your gambling. You will be meeting with a licensed mental health professional, at no cost to you and is completely confidential. Help is just a phone call away.

(402) 398-5566 or 1-888-847-4975